



UWS Academic Portal

The promotion of social justice

Carnicelli, Sandro; Boluk, Karla

Published in:
Journal of Hospitality Leisure Sport & Tourism Education

DOI:
[10.1016/j.jhlste.2017.01.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2017.01.003)

E-pub ahead of print: 24/01/2017

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Carnicelli, S., & Boluk, K. (2017). The promotion of social justice: Service learning for transformative education. *Journal of Hospitality Leisure Sport & Tourism Education*, 21(B), 126-134.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2017.01.003>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the UWS Academic Portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact pure@uws.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

The Promotion of Social Justice: Service Learning for Transformative Education

Special Issue: Critical Perspectives in Education

Abstract

The paper presents the scenario and ontological reasoning behind three social justice projects developed by the authors. It is followed up by an exploration of service learning as a tool to be used to disrupt the traditional in-class learning approach. Service learning is connected to transformative education as a framework to enhance the reflections regarding the three activities. The paper concludes by presenting a model signifying our counternormative pedagogical approach. The linkage between service learning and transformative education aims to co-engage educators with our students and co-enhance our view of social justice within our communities.

Key words: social justice, service learning, transformative education, counternormative pedagogy.

1- Introduction

Facilitating opportunities for university students to reach their full potential requires exposing them to a wide range of experiences, both in and out of the university environment. Students need to be challenged intellectually, as well as creatively, innovatively, politically in areas such as social justice so that they can go out into the world with their eyes, hearts and minds wide open to make it a better place. Inspired by the work of McGuire, Tucker and Mainieri (2013) the question that guides this study is what are our *responsibilities* as facilitators of education? We further query what can be done to improve the educational process? And further, how can we use our educational philosophies to guide us in this process? The scholarly contribution of this study is to contribute to the research exploring the confluence of service learning and transformative critical pedagogy and how this transforms students as social agents.

This paper is the story of two scholars from different backgrounds who crossed paths during their PhD studies in New Zealand. Since then, we have been working together, specifically in challenging and better understanding our role in education, as well as our responsibilities to society. In Boluk and Carnicelli (2015) we briefly explored our crossroads, backgrounds and focused in on the initial projects we developed with our students. However, since this publication we have developed a peer support approach where we rely on each other to review and challenge our educational philosophies, discuss ideas, and consider how to implement them. This continuous reflective approach on our individual educational philosophies has led us to reconsider experiential learning in higher education (as per the title of our previous publication *Activism and Critical Reflection through Experiential Learning*). Accordingly, in this paper we concern ourselves specifically with considering service learning as a way to facilitate and mobilize a transformative education focusing on social justice.

The shift in our personal views is likely the result of our interaction with the different educational worlds in which we are currently engaging (United Kingdom and Canada), as well as based on the projects and experiences including *Academics for a Better World* discussed previously in Boluk and Carnicelli (2015). Our work reflects the collective imagination of two young untenured scholars and the possibilities that can emerge when working together on generating opportunities for our students outside the confines of university lecture halls. Together our teaching philosophies are grounded in '*counternormative pedagogy*' (Howard, 1998, p. 28) as such, our paper outlines what is possible when we collectively challenge the dominant discourse in education. In this paper we present a further development in our educational position as individuals, friends, and research partners. The first part of this paper will review the development from thinking about experiential learning through service learning to transformative

education as a core part of our educational philosophies. At the heart of our understanding of transformative education lies a focus on social justice using critical pedagogy as a theoretical approach. This paper does not aim to present traditional empirical research but instead, a reflective piece based on the activities we created and the conversations, feedback and reflective diaries of students engaged in the projects. As such, the 'voice' of students presented here are not considered data and have been extracted from the reflective feedback provided by students during or after their engagement in the projects we have facilitated.

2- Educational Philosophies and their Crossroads

Academia as a working environment is currently heavily reliant on peer-support. Academics review papers for journals, they can be part of the validation of courses in other institutions, collaborate in research and consultancy, deliver guest lectures in other classes, faculties and institutions. Furthermore, they take part in tenure and promotion processes, hiring panels and they can also act as external examiners. In this collegiate environment scholars should engage with each other, share practices, understandings and collaborate in order to develop educational practices. However, it is also important to consider scholars as unique human beings with different backgrounds, stories and education and it is important to remember that people can see the world using 'different lenses', in some case sharing similar beliefs but at the same time disagreeing in other essential views.

The authors of this paper are in essence different. One is from Brazil, the other from Canada; one has a degree in Physical Education while the other in Tourism; two people coming from two different paths, with different inspirations, family backgrounds, and life/educational experiences. Although our differences are evident, we share a similar view about higher education and collectively challenge our *responsibilities* as facilitators of education. What bonds our projects and this reflective piece of work are the commonalities in our educational philosophies. It is the crossroads of our *beings-in-education* and the transmutation from theory to action that have been leading our journey. This journey in our educational philosophies means promoting interesting and stimulating opportunities (both in and out of the lecture theatre) that will encourage students to engage in a process that leads to critical, reflective and transformative learning. Also, mutual in our philosophies is the focus on a dialogue-based learning process that facilitates the two-way communication of critical discussion between the people stimulating students to use creativity as a way to discover and share knowledge.

Our work co-creating alongside our students *Academics for a Better World* (AFBW) (Boluk and Carnicelli, 2015) at the University of the West of Scotland (United Kingdom) and Dalarna University (Sweden)

between 2012 and 2014, was developed in line with our own personal values, as a way to activate our educational philosophies and provide meaningful opportunities for our students seeking citizen engagement opportunities and professional insights. Below we outline the projects that are the concretization of our thoughts, ideas and beliefs about the engagement with our students in events and tourism supporting social justice learning.

Academics for a Better World (AFBW) started as an extra-curricular forum for a group of students in the Events Management Program at the University of the West of Scotland and from the International Tourism Management Undergraduate Program and Masters in Tourism Destination Development Program at the University of Dalarna in Sweden to engage with local communities and charities and develop events and activities based on a service learning approach (Boluk & Carnicelli, 2015). These activities were not directly associated with specific modules/units/courses but external activities aiming to develop opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and engage with the community (Boluk & Carnicelli, 2015). AFBW started in Scotland and involved activities such as tree planting, micro-economics activities for fundraising, as well as engagement with local charities and community groups. Similarly, the Swedish team led by Dr. Karla Boluk (faculty member responsible for the projects), organized multiple events to fundraise for local community organizations. The activities carried out were not predetermined in either of the AFBW groups but were rather a result of several dialogues that took place in partnership with the students.

The work with the AFBW and emergent student-professor ideas led to the development of two new projects: the *Volunteering Academy (Scotland)* and the *Big Ideas Challenge (Canada)*. In these projects the focus was more directed on aiding marginalized community members and addressing health and well-being. In both groups the activities were followed by critical reflective practices and a continuation of exchanging experiences between faculty and students.

The *Volunteering Academy* established in Scotland had the aim to bring marginalized, long-term unemployed people from the community into the university environment and provide assistance with the articulation and development of soft skills. Students of School of Business and Enterprise at the University of the West of Scotland involved in the *Volunteering Academy* engaged with long-term unemployed people helping them to develop skills that they have learned themselves as part of their degree. In addition to supporting and engaging the local community the objective of the project is to develop the critical thinking capability of students using a service learning approach; and encourage students to reflect on the skills they have, their own 'self in the world', and their responsibilities towards tackling social injustice. During three weeks students keen to engage in the project were meeting with

Dr. Sandro Carnicelli to design the activities, discuss expectations and objectives to be achieved. This operational design became a weekly discussion group where students could reflect on their own self presence and engagement with the community and well as the best ways they could contribute to social justice.

The 2015 *Big Ideas Challenge for Health and Wellbeing* is a platform designed to encourage students to consider their entrepreneurial capability and celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit thriving in the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences (AHS) at the University of Waterloo. The organizers prepared students for the challenge by taking them through a series of workshops including designing their business model via a lean canvas, funding and financing and how to deliver an effective pitch following a written submission of interest outlining their big idea. Nine teams pitched their health related hardware and social solutions to a panel of high profile judges following the workshops. The competition was the only one of its kind at the University of Waterloo, directly geared towards AHS students on a campus world-renowned for its Engineering Program. The prizes awarded provided opportunities for students to continue receiving support on their idea in preparation for bringing their idea to market including mentorship with external community stakeholders and access to accommodation, networking and workshops at St.Paul's GreenHouse an affiliated University College at the University of Waterloo (the GreenHouse is the only live-in incubator focused on social entrepreneurship in North America).

The three projects outlined above relied on the peer-support system with both authors helping and encouraging each other to reflect on their approach to the activities. Moreover, the three extra-curricular service learning activities became the foundation of our pedagogical methodology contrasting to traditional classroom-based teaching.

AFBW developed by the University of the West of Scotland and Dalarna University involved 35 students, the Volunteering Academy had 14 participants and the *Big Ideas Challenge for Health and Wellbeing* had 14 students. The observations and quotations used in this paper were extracted from reflections and reports written by our students and from the notes taken during the post activity discussions and critical reflective meetings we had with students. The next section will explore the characteristics of the service learning activities we developed and the essential tools to progress towards a deeper transformative education in students involved.

3- Service Learning

The academic literature on service learning does not provide universal agreement or one definition of the term. Indeed, the term has been used to refer to an educational philosophy, a pedagogical

approach, and an educational experience (Butin, 2010; Deeley, 2010; Deeley 2015). Service learning has also been perceived as a strategy to actively engage students in the consideration of their role in their broader community. According to Deeley (2015) service learning involves service to the community and academic study with clear links to concepts such as social justice, citizenship playing “an important role in the development of critical thinking graduates” (p. 10). We agree with Deeley’s (2015) position and see service learning as an intentional approach to academic learning that serves as a way to bridge communication between faculty, students and community. One of the goals of service learning is to assist in the acquisition of knowledge that will better equip students with understanding the world (Eyler & Giles, 1999), as well as preparing them for the job market; and simultaneously building critical thinking capabilities. Indeed, two student reflections on their experiences with the *Volunteering Academy* said:

I have benefited by engaging with students from different year groups, and we have all benefited from working as part of a team. Skills again which are transferable to lots of other situations in life (Clare, Scotland).

This experience has opened my eyes and helped me understand that it’s the little things you do for someone that has the greatest effects [...] I know the skills they [community participants] gained helped them professionally and helped them feel less isolated in society (Sara, Scotland).

The *Volunteering Academy* raised student awareness regarding the inequalities in their community, as well as their own personal skill sets that could add value and inherently improve the quality of life of those living around them. Swords and Kiely (2010) recognize service learning as a movement building approach to pedagogy as it can lead students, faculty and communities to question existing social, economic and political institutions. Accordingly, service learning has the potential to encourage problem-posing education based on the consideration of the way people exist in their world not as a static reality but, as a reality in process (Freire, 1970). Thus, pedagogy is not neutral and should be transformative (Freire, 1970). Working with real issues related to stakeholders outside of the classroom presents a meaningful opportunity for students.

In the Tourism literature, service-learning has not been extensively explored but some interesting work has been done in the area of Sustainable Tourism (Jamal, Taillon and Dredge, 2011) and Volunteer Tourism (Sin, 2009) focusing on the links between the tourist and the local communities as a learning

process and an approach to education. Ideally, a service learning approach to education may facilitate problem-posing, whereby students along with faculty are confronted with significant dimensions of their contextualized reality encouraging critical reflection and the generation of solutions. Problem-posing education was evident across all of our projects. In the case of the *Volunteering Academy* one student said:

The individuals who came, spoke about past experiences where they had been on a course with a room full of people and they didn't gain anything from their experience. This in itself proves that in order to be beneficial the support given needs to be more or less on a 1 to 1 basis (Clare, Scotland).

Engaging in community service has been recognized as a way to prepare students to adopt an active citizenship role (Howard, 1998). Eyler and Giles (1999) put forth a number of potential benefits resulting in a focus on service learning. Learning begins with personal connections, it is useful, developmental, transforming and citizenship rests on learning. One international student who participated in AFBW asserted:

I found it worthwhile to get involved in at least some part of Swedish society and getting in contact with and working with locals outside of the university. It was important to me that funds raised were for local charities (Mari, Sweden).

Howard (1998, p.21) argues that academic service learning “is not merely the addition of a community service option or requirement to an academic course. A clause on a syllabus that directs students to complete community service hours as a course requirement or in lieu of another course assignment does not constitute academic service learning”. Our engagement with service learning has occurred outside of our course curriculum encouraging students to meet, collaborate, and learn from each other, while working to improve the communities they are a part of.

To Howard (1998), students' community service works as a critical learning complement to the academic goals of a course. As previously stated the service learning activities that the authors facilitated were not affiliated with specific courses but were rather on-going opportunities and recognized as extra-curricular. The authors believe that their service learning implementation provided a backdrop for their

students to consider their broader responsibilities and accountability as professionals and community stewards. One student from the *Volunteering Academy* said:

I enjoyed meeting people from all walks of life and the program definitely opened my eyes to the lives of people all around me. My favorite part was seeing the difference that we were capable of making in people's lives. Seeing them improve and leave each week with a big smile thanking us for all of our help left me grateful to be part of the a program that contributes to the community in this way (Nicola, Scotland).

This example demonstrates the student's realization of the need in the community, as well as her competence to respond to that need. Similarly, two students from the *AFBW* group identified how their involvement aided in their employment opportunities subsequent to graduation and may have influenced their trajectory:

My involvement has helped me to grow as a person, I have gained so much experience and it [AFBW] helped me find a job after my studies and I still contribute to a better world (Steffi, Sweden).

For me AFBW was just the start. I now work for the Cardiovascular and Intervention Radiology Society of Europe which is a non-profit organization focused on education and the development of new strategies. I'm responsible for all event organizing including a sport event for the Austrian Children Cancer Organization (Andi, Sweden).

Service learning promotes the renegotiation of traditional roles assumed by faculty and students (Sandmann, Kiely & Grenier, 2009). Freire (1970) articulates that a liberal and open-minded education must resolve the teacher-student contradiction and appreciate that both are simultaneously teachers and students. An important impetus for our students to initially get involved and 'try out' some of our platforms was the enthusiasm we had for the various initiatives. This is evidenced in the *AFBW* group in Sweden that ceased to exist when Karla took up her second academic post at the University of Ulster in the UK.

Powell, James and Johnson (2013) in their discussion on integrated curriculum design challenged the siloing in course structure and determined to be innovators within higher education. Kiely (2004)

highlights when faculty, students and community members confront their narrowly defined pedagogical box, it is then they are able to consider new ways to change the structures and practices of organizations they are affiliated with. A participant of Powell et al.'s (2013, p.114) research in their explanation of the process of integrated curriculum design articulated "the timing was right for us to do something very creative. Others talk about 'thinking outside the box' we threw the box away (and recycled it, of course)!" The consideration of service learning as movement building as Swords and Kiely (2010) put it, requires faculty to reconsider how and where learning occurs. The Justicia Global program organized at Ithaca College (Swords and Kiely, 2010) serves to challenge students to re-evaluate power relations and consider positionality, ideology and hegemony which can constrain individual thinking and social action. The program sought to engage students "through structured activities and intentional experiences with community members whose perspectives challenge existing social arrangements" (Swords and Kiely, 2010, p.154). *AFBW* in both Sweden and Scotland encouraged students to mutually consider inequalities in their communities and their role in confronting inequality. The *Volunteering Academy* and the *Big Ideas Challenge* encouraged deeper thinking but also interaction and collaboration with the communities in which learning was facilitated.

Freire (1970) described the traditional model of education as an act of merely depositing information, via teachers to their students, similar to a transaction made at a bank. Accordingly, the banking model of education relied on teachers to completely fill their student receptacles, and students to permit themselves to be filled (Freire, 1970). McGuire, Tucker and Mainieri (2013) suggest that the traditional approach to education has resulted in students' preference for a fast food type of education with a simple set of directions in order to achieve success. The authors use the example of the preparation required to make microwavable popcorn. The efficiency of popcorn is placed in contrast with the preparation of a Thanksgiving meal which is a much more complicated process requiring planning and the co-ordination of multiple parts. Although the result may not be perfect it will nevertheless result in denser nutritional content (McGuire et al., 2013). The latter could be argued to create not only more nutritious and enjoyable food to consume, but also an enjoyable process as people engage in the creative experience of collaboration, similar to service learning. The benefit of adopting such an approach to teaching via service learning was clearly captured by one student in the *Volunteering Academy*:

My perception of people looking for work changed as I had at the beginning envisioned a certain stereotype which proved straight away to be wrong. My opinion of people changed. I learned a

great deal from the people I worked with and felt like I did make a difference (Susannah, Scotland).

Service learning was the tool used to de-construct the 'traditional' in-class teaching styles and adapt to the new profile of students. However, the approach itself would appear vague and disconnected without a reflective process that would encourage students to experience transformation in their life and in the life of their community. For this reason the service learning we used in our projects was combined with a reflective process based on the concept of transformative learning and experiences. This reflective process as it will be shown in the next section focused not only in the micro-environment of the project but also in the macro-environment around the students and their own presence in society, their civic engagement and personal and professional development. The next section will present evidence regarding the reflective process and the philosophical framework based on transformative education and experiences.

4- Transformative Education and Experiences for Social Justice

The university environment has changed in recent decades towards a more neoliberal agenda and focus on individualism and employment-orientated curricula (Giroux, 2002; Lynch, 2006). In this environment it seems difficult to disrupt what Kegan (2000, p.49) calls 'informational learning' referring to the extension of cognitive capacities changing 'what we know' in order to offer a deeper transformative experience. Students are pushed to perceive university as a place to gain instrumental knowledge that will lead them to a graduate job; even when there is the possibility for scholars to provide a different type of experience based on the transformation of how students view themselves and their world (Clark, 1993). In line with Schumacher's (1997) argument, a focus on the quality of learning deserves attention; specifically encouraging opportunities for students to make a direct impact towards a sustainable future. If the concept of service learning explored above, is the tool offering us elements to justify an alternative approach to teaching, allowing us to be creative outside of the classroom, transformative education is the philosophical underpinning that will help students view the world in different ways and further develop their critical minds. Transformative learning involves "a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world (Morrell & O'Connor, 2002, p.xvii). According to Mezirow (2000) transformative learning is the meaning-making process that will be activated via rational thought and reflection that is connected to the Freirean concept of 'conscientization' (Freire, 1970).

Indeed, Baumgartner (2001) points out that transformative education for Paulo Freire is based on the process of 'conscientization' that can occur when experiencing social injustices. In the case of our projects the 'conscientization' process was not necessarily to push our students into socially unjust situations but rather to hear, engage, support and 'feel the wounds' of some of the disadvantaged groups. We believe that a deeper engagement between students and marginalized groups aligned with reflective and critical thought can lead to the transformation of the students' views regarding the world and social justice. To develop our students, ourselves and our communities into whole human beings who care and are equipped with the skills and information needed to express and respond to pressing problems is the goal of these interactions and activities. All our projects included this transformative reflective process with students not only having the opportunity to help others but to discover some of the issues in the communities around them, reflect upon social injustices, and their role in responding. One student from the *Volunteering Academy* said this:

One man came in needing help building a CV and I sat with him for over 4 hours creating one together. The man had never had a permanent job for more than 6 months in his entire life and was over 50 years old. After sitting with him [...] as he typed out his CV [...] I was amazed at the life he lived and began to see the differences of how our neighbours' lives can be [...] after one session he left having learned how to switch on a computer, had his own e-mail address and both an electronic and hard copies of his CV (Nicola, Scotland).

For Nicola, this experience was engaging and clearly allowed her autonomy as she quickly assimilated to the situation and explored how to best assist this man who required basic computer literacy training and assistance developing his Curriculum Vitae.

A participant from the *Big Ideas Challenge*, Rachel, responded to our call for *Expressions of Interest* when grappling with what steps to take following graduation when most of her friends were considering grad school. The *Big Ideas Challenge* spoke to her directly as she considered her role in her two grandmother's journeys; one with Vascular Dementia and the other recovering from breast cancer. Accordingly, her venture Marlena Books (a portmanteau of Helena and Marilyn her grandmother's names) was a result of her ability to problem-pose and create a meaningful way for her grandmothers to participate in their favorite leisure activity reading. The *Big Ideas Challenge* was transformative for Rachel following her participation.

The Big Ideas Challenge was my first introduction to social entrepreneurship, and changed the direction of my life. I entered the competition as an undergrad with an idea. I was confused with how I might use my degree after graduation. I graduated with a business model, a viable social venture and the confidence to pursue this as my career. Before Big Ideas I could not find a way to connect my passion for health and helping others with my natural business inclination; the Big Ideas Challenge gave me an avenue to connect the two and pursue a career I'm passionate about while creating social impact. I am living my dream! I never would have imagined to be in this position but I am so happy and grateful I am (Rachel, Canada).

For Rachel, her participation in *The Big Ideas Challenge* was empowering and clearly enhanced her self-confidence as she was considering next steps following graduation, as well as how to respond to a pressing social problem. The engagement of our students with charities and their realities; with disabled people; with long-term unemployed members of their local communities were the service learning activities that submitted to the meaning-making process of reflection, rational-thought and conscientization transformed the students' views of the world. The activities aimed to help students challenge their old assumptions (see Courtenay et al, 1998) in a safe, open, and trusting environment that allowed participation, collaboration, exploration, critical reflection, and feedback (Taylor, 2000). Feedback and support in the reflective practices become essential if transformative education is seen not as an independent act but an interdependent relationship built on trust (Taylor, 2000). After all, it was possible for us as scholars to use these experiences and the reflective approach of students to discuss the place of events and tourism in these different realities contributing to the development of a critical view of the area.

5- The Challenges in Developing a Transformative Education

Service learning and transformative education challenge the dominant discourse in relation to the traditional model of higher education and teaching approaches. As such, it has been referred to as a counternormative pedagogy (Howard, 1998) and is filled with dilemma inviting resistance as a consequence of its opposition. A notable critical assessment of service learning was put forth by Eby (1998) who highlighted that the dominant voice in the literature was representative of advocates of service learning rather than community leaders and residents. The above discussion is co-presented with the advocates (the researchers), as well as an important stakeholder in the learning process, our

students. We sought to present their salient reflections to demonstrate the meaning of the activities we have created and facilitated alongside our day jobs.

Service learning concerns have been expressed regarding the quality of education and service provided in communities, an appropriate amount of time within the curriculum to allow for meaningful learning experiences, budgetary constraints and ability to sustain school-community partnerships (Hood, 2009). Furthermore, service learning has been criticized for skewing programming towards the needs of students rather than towards the needs of communities. On this point, Eby (1998) drew attention to the limitations of community service, questioning the ability to contribute to real change within communities, referring to such attempts as McService and happy meal community service. Accordingly, such a criticism may suggest that the popcorn approach to learning (McGuire et al., 2013) is not dissimilar in service learning. Some of the above student reflections demonstrate the sustainable and meaningful contributions of our students to their communities (e.g., Rachel launched a social enterprise called Marlena Books as an outcome of her participation in the *Big Ideas Challenge*; Nicola went to a community enhancement international programme with a charity after her graduation from the BA Events Management and participation in the Volunteering Academy; and Susannah became an ambassador of a charity looking after refugees in her community). Whilst in some reflections the benefits received by communities are clear, a further exploration of this is warranted.

Eby (1998, p.2) puts forth that "universities use service-learning as a public relations device to enhance their reputations in their communities in order to raise funds and recruit students or to mask negative impacts of other actions they take." As such, the social impact generated off campus is solely for the purposes of external recognition resulting in financial remuneration. This could be and should be contested. Both of the authors have had a mobile academic trajectory with an interest in engaging with their community wherever they live. Service learning provided a vehicle in which to do that and was not overshadowed by university-wide fundraising interests.

The implementation of transformative education does not come without challenges. Some of the criticisms highlighted by Eby above suggest that faculty who accept this challenge may expect "initial resistance from students, periodic self-doubt about their own teaching accomplishments, and colleagues' looking askance upon this methodology" (Howard, 1998, p.28). However, the payback could include "renewed motivation for learning by students, renewed excitement for teaching by instructors, and better preparation of students for their roles as lifelong citizens and learners" (Howard, 1998, p. 28), as well as preparation for professional placements post-graduation. The development of the various

platforms described in this paper has been intentional and a mutual point of motivation for both of us as teachers-students and for our students as student-teachers.

A challenge in implementing transformative education activities felt by the authors of this paper was the non-supportive critiques referring to these activities as not worthy to young, untenured scholars and their development. Here, the point directly or indirectly made by university colleagues to the authors, concerns the fact that the academic agenda should focus on a traditional career-path and in becoming well-established and internationally recognised in the field to gain promotion (and tenure). However, the push for career-focused paths can be, at times, in conflict with educational philosophies of scholars; and their resistance to the neoliberal agendas of universities that is increasingly placing more emphasis on the productivity of research outcomes published in journals with high-impact factors (see more in Lorenz, 2012). In this fight between external drives and internal values and beliefs, scholars can find themselves lost as pointed out by Ball (2012, p.20): “There is for many in Higher Education a growing sense of ontological insecurity; both a loss of a sense of meaning in what we do and of what is important in what we do. Are we doing things for the ‘right’ reasons – and how can we know?”

Moreover, the tasks currently involved in the professional life of academics in the UK and Canada goes much beyond teaching and research commitments. Academics in these countries, as in other parts of the western world are currently pushed to excel simultaneously in a variety of other areas such as income generation (entrepreneurship), enhancing one’s university’s profile, engaging with external stakeholders, and contributing to university administration (Kinman, 2014; Matthews, Lodge, and Bosanquet, 2012). In this environment of extreme pressure there is not always room for young scholars to develop their educational philosophies and creatively provide transformative experiences for their students. Also, financial support from university budgets for extra-curricular activities can be limited. *Academics for a Better World* and *The Volunteering Academy* received no financial support from the two Universities but managed to raise funds from different external sources (government funding and trusts) to run the projects. The *Big Ideas Challenge* received some support from the Faculty to assist with operating costs. On the other hand, the authors felt supported in their projects regarding their time allocation to develop transformative educational practices with students who were keen to be engaged. Indeed a relevant challenge faced by the authors of this paper in creating the projects described above relates to the engagement of students in extra-curricular activities, as well as their perceptions about the potential value of these activities for their career. University courses in Events and Tourism had vocational characteristics in their foundations (Aggett & Busby, 2011) and undergraduate students are in some cases pushed to focus on the technical skills and experiences directly related to the industry that

will help them gain employment after graduating. In this scenario some of the 'soft-skills' and critical reflective approaches are ignored by students and staff. For this reason the aim of the reflective part of the projects during and after the activities can contribute to students' understandings in regard to how these different perspectives and skills can be important for their career and lifelong learning.

The capability of our students' to reflect led to autonomous exploration and the development of critical thinking which is at the heart of critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, 1970; Giroux 1988; Kincheloe, 2003). Critical social theory underpins the transformative approach to reflection (Ryan, 2011). According to Rogers (2001) reflective skills are considered a way in which to improve students' lifelong learning and this was evidenced in the various activities. Service learning experiences provide students with opportunities to reflect upon their beliefs and deconstruct these beliefs. The deconstruction of ideology occurred in many of the examples highlighted above for example, Rachel's participation in the *Big Ideas Challenge* encouraged her to reflect on her role as an active agent and problem-pose based on health related concerns that directly impacted her family. Moreover, Nicola's involvement with the *Volunteering Academy* encouraged her to address her preconceived notions of joblessness and consider her role in improving the quality of life of those individuals she worked with on computer literacy and skill articulation. Such reflection and action-reflection as proposed by Freire (1970) are key learnings that are bound to have an impact on individuals once they leave University; as indicated by both Andi and Steffi in their acknowledgement of the transformative effect of their involvement in the AFBW group on their trajectory post-graduation.

6- Conclusion

The current university environment in countries such as Canada and the UK are presenting new challenges to young professionals. Scholars need to exceed expectations in multiple areas including teaching and learning, research, external engagement, as well administrative roles that contribute to the wider mission of the university. In this environment of constant pressure, it is also important for academics to develop their educational philosophies and be able to implement projects that will enhance the student experience and foster their critical thinking.

In this context the authors of this paper have been developing a series of activities and projects using service learning to achieve transformative education. The projects have been developed based on peer-support and partnership between the authors aiming to develop a transformative education to Events and Tourism students involving critical thinking and the concept of social justice. Moreover, the authors wanted to break or at least create alternatives for the traditional pedagogies they found in their

institutions. In this perspective our work is also based in Howard (1988) who suggests the necessity to challenge the traditional teaching-learning process and to change the norms and relationships involved between teacher and student. Service-learning can be the pedagogical approach that because of its incongruence with traditional pedagogies can disrupt the norm of individualism, teacher control and student passivity.

Figure 1 below illustrates a model emphasising the processes that lead us in the development of our projects. Our counternormative pedagogical approach utilizes service learning activities as a vehicle promoting an alternative approach to teaching and emphasizing threefold engagement between community, students and teachers. Transformative education is our goal in teaching which can be achieved if adequate attention is devoted to student and teacher reflections. We maintain a focus on how we in the fields of Events and Tourism can actively promote social justice.

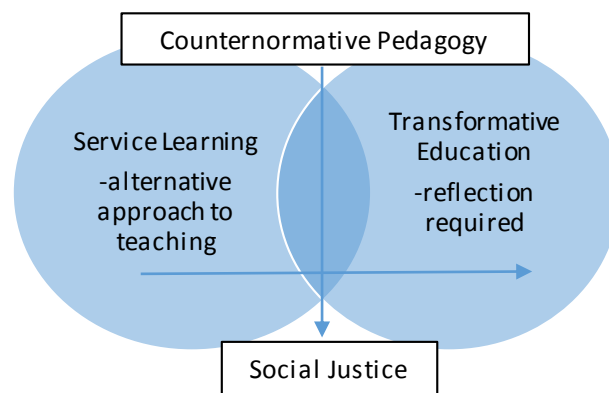


Figure 1: Counter-Normative Pedagogy for Social Justice

It is our hope that the above model will contribute to a discussion about the relevance of extra-curricular activities that are not focused on a traditional 'pass-fail in-class' education but a transformative education using service learning as a vehicle in which to achieve this positive outcome. From the reflections collected to date by our students, it is possible to observe a relevant difference regarding their social-cultural perspectives. Students engaged in our projects became more aware of the community around them and the engagement with external groups together with the reflective approach created a space to acquire new skills that may not always be possible to do in-class. Moreover, the reflective practice made students more aware of the social injustices in their communities and the importance to be pro-actively engaged in tackling such issues. For some, their involvement in the extra-

curricular activities we facilitated changed their trajectory. The approach we encouraged in our students' reflections are in line with the aspirations and purposes of modern day educational institutions which endeavor to provide enriching experiences and ensure that students realize their potential leading them to post-graduate employment (Brockbank & McGill, 1998).

The reflective practices both in the writing but also in the conversation we had with our students focused not only on themselves and their personal and professional development but in their connection with the society around them and its social problems. To Rodgers (2002) teachers also need to develop a critical and reflective practice where they can confront the students and their learning, themselves, their teaching, their own subject matter, and the whole context of these interactions. According to Rogers (2001, p.55) '[r]eflective practices that are intellectually credible can promote resiliency and resourcefulness in the face of life's dynamic challenges and encourage habits of individual and collective attention and analysis that can sustain higher education as it works to address the problems of society'.

This paper did not aim to provide empirical research with methodological rigour but to provide a starting point for other scholars to re-think the Events and Tourism curricula (both within and outside of the lecture theatre) in order to accommodate transformative experiences. The projects described in this paper had different lifespan with the AFBW running in 2012-2013, the Volunteering Academy between 2014 and 2016 and the Big Ideas Challenge in 2015 and 2016. The activities involved 65 students in the different institutions who were participants and co-creators of the information and ideas shared here and collected using formal and informal reflective approaches such as reports, focus groups, and conversations after each session in group meetings as well as at the end of the whole project. This paper is a step forward from our previous descriptive work (Buluk and Carnicelli, 2015) providing the philosophical underpinning of our projects. Here, we felt it was important to initially present the grounds and theoretical framework behind our initiatives. Future empirical research will be developed presenting data collected systematically with participants throughout their involvement in the projects. The next step should also focus on providing direct input in the development of the curriculum in Events and Tourism contributing to the inclusion of transformative educational practices.

7- References

Aggett, M. and Busby, G. (2011). Opting out of internship: Perceptions of hospitality, tourism and events management undergraduates at a British university. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education*, 10(1): 106–113

Ball, S. J. (2012). Performativity, Commodification and Commitment: An I-Spy Guide to the Neoliberal University. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 60(1): 17-28

Baumgartner, L. M. (2001). An update on transformational learning. In S. B. Merriam (Ed.), *New directions for adult and continuing education* (pp. 15-24). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Boluk, K. and Carnicelli, S. (2015) Activism and critical reflection through experiential learning. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 15(3): 242-251.

Brockbank, A. & McGill, I. (1998). *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*. London: Society for Research into Higher Education.

Butin, D.W (2010). *Service-Learning in Theory and Practice* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Clark, M. C. (1993). Transformational Learning. In S. B. Merriam (ed.), *An Update on Learning Theory. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (pp. 47-56). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Courtenay, B. C., Merriam, S. B., and Reeves, P. M. (1998) The Centrality of Meaning-Making in Transformational Learning: How HIV-Positive Adults Make Sense of Their Lives. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 48(2): 102–119.

Deeley, S.J. (2010). Service-Learning: Thinking Outside the Box. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 11(1): 43–53.

Deeley, S.J. (2015). *Critical Perspectives on Service-Learning in Higher Education*. New York: Palgrave

Eby, J. W. (1998). Why Service-Learning is Bad. Retrieved March 2003 (<http://www.mesiah.edu/agape/pdf%20files/wrongsvc.pdf>).

Eyler, J. and Giles, D. (1999). Identifying the learning outcomes of service. In J. Eyler and D. Giles (eds) *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning* (pp. 1-22). San Francisco: Josey-Bass Publishers.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans.) New York, NY: Herder and Herder.

Giroux, H. (2002) Neoliberalism, Corporate Culture and the Promise of Higher Education: the university as a democratic public sphere. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72(4): 1-31.

Giroux, H. (1988). *Teachers as Intellectuals*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Harvey.

Hood, J.G. (2009). Service-learning in dental education: meeting needs and challenges. *Critical Issues in Dental Education*. 73(4), 454-463.

Howard, J.P.F. (1998). Academic Service Learning: A Counternormative Pedagogy. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 73: 21-29.

Jamal, T., Taillon, J., & Dredge, D. (2011). Sustainable tourism pedagogy and academic-community collaboration: A progressive service-learning approach. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 11(2): 133–147.

Kegan, R. (2000) What 'Form' Transforms?: A Constructive-Developmental Perspective on Transformational Learning. In J. Mezirow and Associates (eds.), *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (pp.35-69). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kiely, R. (2004). A chameleon with a complex: Searching for transformational international service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 10(2): 5-20.

Kincheloe, J. (2003). *Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment* (2nd ed). London: Routledge-Falmer.

Kinman, G. (2014) Doing More with Less? Work and Wellbeing in Academics. *Somatechnics*. 4(2): 219-235.

Lynch, K. (2006). Neo-liberalism and Marketisation: the implications for higher education. *European Educational Research Journal*, 5(1): 1-17.

Lorenz, C. (2012) If You're So Smart, Why Are You under Surveillance? Universities, Neoliberalism, and New Public Management. *Critical Inquiry*, 38 (3): 599-629

Matthews, K., Lodge, J. and Bosanquet, A. (2012). Early career academic perceptions attitudes and professional development activities: questioning the teaching and research gap to further academic development. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 19(2): 112–124.

McGuire, F.A., Tucker, T.W., and Mainieri, T.L. (2013). They know my name new dynamic role of faculty. *Scholar: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*. 1: 106-112.

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to Think Like an Adult: Transformation Theory: Core Concepts. In J. Mezirow and Associates (eds.) *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (pp.1-33). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Morrell, A., & O'Connor, M. (2002). *Introduction*. In: E. O'Sullivan, A. Morrell & M. O'Connor (eds) *Expanding the Boundaries of Transformative Learning: essays on theory and praxis*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. xv-xx.

Powell, G.M., James, J., & Johnson, C.W. (2013). With their permission skeptics, resisters, and supporters. *Scholar: A Journal of Leisure Studies and Recreation Education*. 1: 113-121.

Rodgers, C. (2002). Defining reflection: Another look at John Dewey and reflective thinking. *Teachers College Record*, 104(4): 842 –866.

Rogers, R. (2001). Reflection in higher education: A concept analysis. *Innovative Higher Education*, 26(1): 37-57.

Ryan, M. (2011). Improving reflective writing in higher education: a social semiotic perspective. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16(1), 99-111.

Sandmann, L., Kiely, R., & Grenier, R. (2009). Program planning in service-learning: A neglected dimension. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 15(2): 17-33.

Schumacher, E.F. (1997). *'This I believe' and other essays*. Dartington: Green Books.

Sin, H. L. (2009). Volunteer tourism—"Involve me and I will learn"? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(3): 480–501.

Swords, A.C.S. & Kiely, R. (2010). Beyond pedagogy: Service learning as movement building in higher education. *Journal of Community Practice*, 18(2): 148-170.

Taylor, E. W. (2000). Analyzing Research on Transformative Learning Theory. In J. Mezirow and Associates (eds.), *Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress* (pp.285-328). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.